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DuSable Park, Chicago

DuSable Park



Aerial view of DuSable Park

Type	Municipal
Location	Near North Side
Coordinates	41°53′22″N, 87°36′48″W
Size	3.24 acres (1.31 ha)

DuSable Park is an urban park (3.24 acres) in Chicago, Illinois currently awaiting redevelopment. It was originally announced in 1987 by then Mayor Harold Washington. The park is to be named after Jean Baptiste Pointe du Sable, the first non-native settler of Chicago.

Location

The park would be located directly east of North Lake Shore Drive and southwest of Navy Pier with Lake Michigan to its west. To its north would be the Ogden Slip and to its south would be the Chicago River. The Chicago Spire is approved for construction just west of DuSable Park.

History

Formation

Following the construction of the original jetty for the Chicago Harbor Lighthouse, lake currents were affected and soil was deposited at the area now known as DuSable Park.^[1] In 1857 the State of Illinois sold 40 acres, including the site later to be known as DuSable Park, to the Chicago Dock and Canal Trust.^[1] In 1893 the company dug out the Ogden Slip to allow boats to pull cargo from railroads at North Pier and the DuSable Park site was filled in by the United States Army Corps of Engineers.^{[1][2]} In 1948 the Chicago Plan Commission passed resolution excluding use of lakefront property to only recreation or for harbor or terminal facilities for passenger and freight vessels.^[1] In 1964 the Chicago Dock and Canal trust leased the land to the developers of the Lake

Point Tower.^[1] Later, Chicago Dock and Canal Trust sold the land south of the tower to a division of Centex called Centex Homes with an option to build additional towers on the site that is now DuSable Park.^[1]

Becoming DuSable Park

In an effort to fight possible development, Mayor Richard J. Daley's administration enacted the Lakefront Protection Ordinance which forbid the land east of Lake Shore Drive to be developed.^[1] Centex filed a lawsuit against the City of Chicago after the city purchased the land.^[1] Eventually Centex Homes dropped the option to build on DuSable Park.^[1] The Chicago Dock and Canal Trust kept the option to build but agreed not to build on the site.^[1] In 1987 Mayor Harold Washington dedicated the parcel as "DuSable Park" in honor of Jean Baptiste Pointe du Sable, the first known settler of Chicago.^[1] The Chicago Park District took ownership of the land at DuSable Park in 1988 via a quit claim deed.^[2] Eight years later Keer-McGee and River East L.L.C were named a companies responsible for investigating and cleaning up suspected radioactive contamination at DuSable Park.^[2] The next year, MCL Companies absorbed the holdings to Chicago Dock and Canal Trust of DuSable Park.^[1] MCL Companies then gave the land to the Chicago Park District and agreed to pay \$600,000 toward its development.^[1] In July of 2000 the Chicago Park District announced it was planning to lease the land to another developer to build a parking lot on the site.^{[1][2]} Following public outcry and the formation of the DuSable Park Coalition, the Chicago Park District indefinitely postponed the parking lot plan.^{[1][2]} Since that time two public request for proposals were sent out on the topic of developing the property in 2001 and 2004.^[2] Each of those public invitations ended in stalemates.^[2] The Art Institute of Chicago tapped Martin Puryear to design a statue of Jean Baptiste Pointe which will be erected at DuSable Harbor, directly across the river.^[3]

A new DuSable Park

In July of 2005 Christopher Carley of the Fordham Company announced a new development project called the Fordham Spire.^[4] The Fordham Company pledged nearly \$500,000 to assist in the development of the park, which was to adjoin the site of their new tower.^[4] In March of 2007 Shelbourne Development offered \$6 million to finish the development of DuSable Park.^[5] In early May of the same year, that offer jumped to \$9.6 million. Shelbourne offered their own design of the park which included a northbound ramp onto Lake Shore Drive for the adjacent Chicago Spire.^[7] To appease citizens and members of the DuSable Park Coalition, Shelbourne Development restructured the design of the northbound ramp so that it was tucked under Lake Shore Drive and used less park space.^[7]

Redevelopment concerns

The current revetment of the land is in need of repair which may cost up to \$5.7 million.^[3] In addition, soil tests performed at the location of DuSable Park in December 2000 showed contamination of radioactive thorium.^[8] From 1904 through 1936, the Lindsay Light Company processed ores which contained thorium to manufacture thorium impregnated gas mantles.^[9] It was suspected that after the plant closed, contaminated soil was dumped on the location of the proposed park.^[1] It has been reported that Shelbourne Development will soon be taking soil samples to determine the severity of the radioactive contamination.^[7]

See also

- [Parks of Chicago](#)
- [Chicago Park District](#)
- [Chicago Spire](#)
- [Jean Baptiste Pointe du Sable](#)

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